

Using social media to market an estates practice

Specialization calls for focused marketing; after all, a niche practice has a limited client base. With a narrower marketplace, niche practitioners want to ensure that all of their marketing efforts, and the associated costs, are effective, directed and well spent.

As an estates and trusts boutique, we at Hull & Hull LLP have enjoyed taking the traditional marketing mechanisms of writing and speaking to a whole new and exciting level, thanks to the power of social media.

Here is how social media has worked for us:

Podcasting

At Hull & Hull LLP, we produce two weekly podcasts. The first is called *Hull on Estates*, which is geared toward practitioners interested in specific developments in the areas of estates and trusts; the second is called *Hull on Estate and Succession Planning*, which is a more general, estate planning podcast for the public.

Our podcasts are generally 10 minutes in length and are designed to provide our listeners with a short, yet informative, discussion about a timely topic of interest. As with our blogs, we invite our subscribers to comment on our podcasts and suggest possible topics for future discussions as well.

The popularity of podcasts stems from the attractiveness of “time shifting,” flexibility and convenience. Because of the portability of the medium, people can listen when they want, for as long as they want and on whatever topic they choose.



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Blogging

The lawyers in our firm take turns writing our daily blog on a variety of topics, both legal and non-legal. We break this down so that each lawyer writes for one week at a time. This ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity for exposure and that the time commitment is not overly intense. Blogs provide our lawyers with an excellent way to “learn the product,” and motivate us to stay on top of current practice trends and developing case law. They also allow us to demonstrate our expertise in the area and disseminate knowledge to a much wider audience in short and “digestible” quantities.

The key to an effective blog is that it is timely and informative. We do not write from the perspective of someone promoting their practice; rather, we use our blogs to educate about our area of the law and to inform our readers of upcoming events that might be of interest to them.

We also try to make our blogs as user-friendly and searchable as possible. After all, convenience is the key to keeping busy people interested in what we have to say.

Social and professional networking

Recently, we have added a company profile on networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and many of our law-

yers have individual profiles as well. Recognizing that there is no denying the power of social networking on Facebook, we use our presence there as an opportunity to promote our lawyers and market our services to a broader audience. LinkedIn is a business-oriented networking site, where we use our profile to network with peers, acquire new clients and participate in practice groups and discussion forums that are relevant to our practice.

This online networking has been a valuable tool for connecting and communicating with clients (both new and existing) and colleagues as well.

Twitter

Our founding partner Ian M. Hull and I have Twitter profiles, and we regularly “tweet” practice tips on the law of estates and trusts. Tweets are displayed on our individual profile page and delivered to our followers. This, in turn, allows us to engage in a dialogue on any particular topic or issue.

Similarly, we can choose who we would like to follow and automatically receive their tweets. In this way, we can stay on top of trends and be educated and informed of what others in the area are doing. Twitter ultimately facilitates the dissemination of information to a much broader and varied audience and allows us to establish a presence where we might not otherwise have been.

YouTube

YouTube and other video streaming sites have become a mainstay of popular culture. To maximize use of this social



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medium, we began videotaping our *Hull on Estate and Succession Planning* podcasts. As a result, they can now be viewed, as well as listened to, on YouTube and iTunes. By videotaping and streaming our podcasts, we hope to forge a stronger connection with our clients and colleagues, even before we meet them for the first time.

In everything that we do, we are mindful of the importance of being transparent, authentic and true to ourselves. These are the tenets underlying social media, and the best way to gain and maintain the trust, confidence

and loyalty of your audience.

In the end, our goal is to achieve recognition and build credibility in the modern estates and trusts law community and position our firm as a trusted source of information and expertise. ■

Suzana Popovic-Montag is the managing partner of Hull & Hull LLP in Toronto, practising exclusively in the areas of estates, trusts, capacity and fiduciary litigation. She is also a specialized estate mediator and the author of numerous articles published in academic journals.



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An oddity in *Wills & Estates*

Novelist battles Tolkien estate

A bitter legal fight has emerged between the estate of JRR Tolkien and an author — not about theft of one of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* characters, but over a fictional work featuring Tolkien himself as a main character.

Mirkwood, by Steve Hillard, is a novel about a young woman's quest to find her grandfather after discovering documents given to him by Tolkien. The estate wants all copies of it destroyed and all further sales stopped, claiming the author has taken unlawful advantage of the estate. Hillard has responded with a lawsuit alleging that he is within his rights to include a celebrity as a character in his novel, according to Guardian.co.uk.

It's a case of fact being stranger than fiction. —Natalie Fraser